

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS DEMARCHE: RELEASE OF POLITICAL
PRISONERS AND GRADUAL RETURN OF EXILES

REF: (A) STATE 275945, (B) STATE 282352

1. I MADE THE DEMARCHE IN REF A TO GENERAL PEREDA, NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE IS MINISTER OF INTERIOR BUT ALSO BECAUSE HE WILL PROBABLY BE THE KEY FIGURE IN THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT THAT WILL BE IN OFFICE FOR THE FIRST HALF OF OUIM I ALSO REVIEWED WITH PEREDA THE NEW US LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS (REF B) ON HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING FOR ALL RECIPIENTS OF US ECONOMIC AID. I ADDED TO THESE MY PERSONAL APPROACH ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN BOLIVIA THAT I FEEL REQUIRE URGENT ATTENTION. I TOLD PEREDA, IN PARTICULAR, THAT THE PROGRESS REPRESENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM FOR RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE WOULD BE PREJUDICED IN THE ABSENCE OF ACTION ON POLITICAL PRISONERS AND EXILES. WE ARE, I SAID, DEEPLY DISTURBED BY CONTINUING ALLEGED INSTANCES OF MISTREATMENT, EVEN TORTURE, OF SOME POLITICAL PRISONERS. I FOUND THIS, IF TRUE, INHUMAN AND TOTALLY INCONSISTENT WITH THE COURSE THE GOVERNMENT HAD SET FOR BOLIVIA.

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2. PEREDA SAID HE UNDERSTOOD OUR CONCERN WITH HUMAN RIGHTS. HE WANTED TO KNOW WHO WAS GOING TO WRITE THE REPORT ON BOLIVIA THAT WOULD GO TO THE CONGRESS IN JANUARY. (I TOLD HIM THE EMBASSY IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, DRAWING ON ALL THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION WE COULD, BUT THAT WASHINGTON WOULD REVIEW AND POSSIBLY CHANGE THIS REPORT TO SOME EXTENT.) HE

SAID THE BOLIVIAN STORY ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS ONE OF CONTINUED, EVEN DRAMATIC PROGRESS, AND THE GOB THEREFORE HAD NOTHING TO HIDE OR FEAR SO LONG AS THE EMBASSY WAS OBJECTIVE AND FOLLOWED US RULES OF EVIDENCE. IN THIS REGARD HE REGRETTED THAT APPARENTLY SO MUCH OF OUR IMPRESSIONS OF THE SITUATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS COME FROM CLERICS WHO WERE NOT ONLY NOT OBJECTIVE BUT DECLARED POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE UPCOMING CAMPAIGN. HE CITED THAT OBJECTIVE, INTERNATIONAL SOURCES WERE AVAILABLE. PEREDA INDICATED THAT THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS HAD JUST FINISHED A COMPLETE SURVEY OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THEIR CONDITIONS OF DETENTION. HE CONSIDERED THIS AN OBJECTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL JOB AND PROVIDED ME A COPY OF IRC'S REPORT TO THE GOB. AS TO ALLEGATIONS OF WHAT TREATMENT POLITICAL PRISONERS HAD RECEIVED, THE GOB WOULD BE WILLING TO STAND ON THIS REPORT.

3. ONE THING EVERYONE SEEMED TO AGREE ON, PEREDA CONTINUED, WAS THAT RECENT ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE WERE CONFINED TO POLITICAL PRISONERS. THIS QUESTION WOULD SHORTLY BE SETTLED EMPHATICALLY SINCE AFTER CHRISTMAS THERE WILL BE NO MORE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA. HE ASSURED ME THAT MOST REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS WILL BE FREED UNDER THE CHRISTMAS AMNESTY AND THE REST -- WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS DANGEROUS SECURITY CASES--WILL BE EITHER PRESENTED FOR TRIAL FOR COMMON CRIMES OR EXILED.

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4. THE OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF CURRENT POLITICAL EXILES, PEREDA SAID, WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO BOLIVIA, STARTING IN JANUARY. BUT SOME, HE SAID, CONSIDERED SERIOUS SECURITY RISKS, MAY NOT BE ALLOWED TO RETURN BEFORE ELECTIONS. WHO THIS HARD CORE MIGHT BE, HE SAID, HAD NOT YET BEEN FINALLY DECIDED.

5. I TOLD PEREDA THAT HIS NEWS WAS ENCOURAGING ON BOTH COUNTS ALTHOUGH ONE WOULD HAVE TO JUDGE THE SITUATION REGARDING THOSE TO REMAIN IN EXILE WHEN THEIR NUMBER, IDENTITY, AND THE BASIS FOR THIS WAS KNOWN. I ADDED THAT THE OTHER MAJOR CONCERN IN THE FUTURE ON THE PART OF ALL CONCERNED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS IN BOLIVIA WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE THE ELECTIONS AND THE FAIRNESS OF THE PROCESS ITSELF. I NOTED THAT THE BOLIVIAN HISTORICAL RECORD IN THIS REGARD WAS A MIXED ONE AND THAT THERE WAS A PROBLEM OF BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN THE PROCESS ITSELF. WE BOTH COMMENTED ON THE CURRENT SPATE OF ELECTORAL JITTERS AND SECOND THOUGHTS THAT HAS APPEARED AMONG SOME OF THE MILITARY, THE BUSINESS SECTOR, AND SOME OF THE URBAN MIDDLE CLASS. PEREDA CASTIGATED SOME OF THE LATTER TWO GROUPS AS PARLOR DEMOCRATS AT BEST WHO IN FACT DON'T TRUST THE CAMPESINO VOTE.

HE CONCLUDED THAT THE DECISION TO HAVE ELECTIONS IN 1978
WAS THE RIGHT ONE AND THE MISSION OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT
WOULD BE TO SEE THAT THEY WERE CARRIED OUT IN AN ATMOSPHERE
OF FAIRNESS AND STABILITY. THE ONE THING HE SAID THE
MILITARY COULD NOT TOLERATE WAS A RETURN TO THE POLITICAL
CHAOS OF THE PAST.
BOEKER

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